

Information on Cryptosporidiosis

(*Cryptosporidium parvum* Infection)



What is Cryptosporidiosis?

Cryptosporidiosis is a diarrheal illness caused by *Cryptosporidium parvum*, a microscopic parasite that lives in the intestines of infected humans and animals.

What are the symptoms of Cryptosporidiosis?

The most common symptoms are diarrhea (loose, watery stools), cramps, upset stomach, and sometimes fever. Symptoms may come and go. Some people do not develop symptoms at all.

However, Cryptosporidiosis can be life threatening for infants and for persons with compromised immune systems (persons with HIV/AIDS, cancer, or who are transplant recipients, or who are on immunosuppressive drugs).

How does a person become infected with *Cryptosporidium parvum*?

A person can become infected by:

- swallowing water containing the oocysts (oh-oh-cysts) which are the infectious stage of the parasites. The oocysts can be found in contaminated lakes, rivers, springs, ponds, streams, irrigation water, hot tubs, Jacuzzis, or swimming pools.
- eating uncooked food, especially **unwashed vegetables or fruit**, contaminated by *Cryptosporidium*.
- oral/anal sexual contact with an infected person.
- contact with contaminated surfaces such as children's toys, bathroom fixtures, diaper changing tables, diaper pails, etc.
- **not washing their hands after handling soiled diapers** or after playing with infected animals, especially calves, puppies and kittens.

How long after being infected does a person get sick?

Generally from 2 to 10 days. In healthy people symptoms usually last about 2 weeks.

When can someone with Cryptosporidiosis spread it to others?

Infected persons can pass the parasites in their stool for up to **2 months** after becoming ill.

- **Child Care Restrictions** Children with diarrhea should be excluded from child care until their symptoms resolve.
- **Work Restrictions** Health care workers, food service workers, and child care providers who work directly with children, should be excluded from work until their symptoms resolve.
- Children and adults with Cryptosporidiosis **should not swim in public pools or waterparks** for two weeks after their diarrhea stops.

What should I do if I think I have Cryptosporidiosis?

See your doctor! Special lab tests must be ordered to identify *Cryptosporidium parvum* infection.

How can the spread of Cryptosporidiosis be prevented?

- **Wash your hands** after using the toilet, changing diapers, or handling animals.
- **Wash your hands** before preparing and eating food.
- Avoid swallowing water from lakes, rivers, streams, springs, irrigation canals, ponds, swimming pools, etc.
- **Wash and/or peel** all raw vegetables and fruits before eating.
- Abstain from oral/anal sexual contact or use a latex barrier.

What is the treatment for Cryptosporidiosis?

There is no specific treatment for Cryptosporidiosis. Persons with diarrhea should drink plenty of fluids to keep hydrated. Infants, the elderly, and persons with compromised immune systems or other chronic illnesses, are at greater risk of serious illness as a result of Cryptosporidiosis.

If you have questions, please call your doctor or local health department.

Central District Health Department

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Valley County Office

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208-634-7194

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